

1990

was the only thing missing, and I found that nothing else was disturbed. The loss of the ring grieves me, and the mystery perplexes me, and so I have come to you to see if you can suggest anything to relieve me. Understand that I intend to pay you well for your

"Why this question, Mr. Carbon?"

"Well, for anything you like. If you are to question my questions, I fear we will not get on very fast. If he warms with you, of course, he saw you lock it up, and you have proof that you did what you think you did."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Carbon. I am not questioning your questions, but I am questioning your assumptions."

"Very well, I will arrange it, and to-morrow at 3 o'clock I will meet you and escort you home to dinner."

For three days I was an honored guest in the mansion of Mr. Howell, and during

he cried with a sigh of relief. "My sister?"

"No, it was not your sister."

"Who, then? Speak without fear."

"You will have it."

cried, his ashy lips now fairly quivering. "If this man is guilty, were he even a prince of the realm, my own hands should blow his brains out sooner than make my beloved sister the wife

of a dastardly thief. Step into my private room, Mr. Carlson. I will send for him. You must face him before me and make your accusation good or take the consequences."

"Thank you, Mr. Howell, I said. "He

"The ring," he proceeded, "came into [redacted] that I intend to pay you well for your

"Yes, I must know."

"Can I not prevail upon you to let the secret remain with myself? For no other being possesses it."

"No, Mr. Carbon, I must and will have it."

"What say you to your friend, then?"

"What friend?" he exclaimed in amazement.

"Godfrey Percy?"

He fairly staggered as if he had received a blow.

"Impossible!" he gasped.

"It is true."

He sank down upon a seat, and for some time held his head in his hands.

"Are you sure you have not made a mistake?" he asked at length in a hollow voice.

"I am certain of what I assert."

"You can prove it?"

"I can."

"Then you shall prove it. Ah me, poor dear Virginia! It will break her heart! Willingly would I give half my fortune to have these miserable circumstances otherwise."

"But what has to be, Mr. Hargrave?" said I, sympathetically. "She need never know."

He bounded from his seat, his eyes blazing like a madman's, and he turned upon me with a haughty rage that I had never seen equalled, not even on the stage.

"For what do you take me, sir?" he cried, his ashly lips now fairly quivering. "If this man is guilty, were he even a prince of the realm, my own hands should blow his brains out sooner than make my beloved sister the wife

to a dastardly thief. Step into my private room, Mr. Carlson. I will send for him. You must face him before me and make your accusation good or take the consequences.

"Yes, Mr. Howell," I said. "He may deny it and convince you that his word is better than mine, but mark this, if he does deny it, and you accept his denial, I shall have him arrested for felony and all the facts publicly exposed from first to last."

"I accept the conditions," he said. And he at once conferred with his private apartment, in which stood the safe that his friend had opened to rob him.

A servant was despatched for Godfrey Percy, and in a few moments he made his appearance, looking quite unconcerned. "I had arranged to have everything ready for you this morning," he appeared without my disguise the young gentleman did not know me. He glanced at the two of us inquiringly, but I did not keep him in suspense. Stepping up to him, I placed my hand rather roughly upon his shoulder and said:

"Godfrey Percy, I arrest you for stealing your friend's diamond ring and pawning it at Isaac Jacobs'. You will at once accompany me to the office of a magistrate and confront the witnesses."

He turned as white as death, threw up his hands and then fell down on his knees and begged for mercy.

"Spare me!" he cried. "Spare me! It was the first and only time I had ever done such a wicked thing. I wanted a certain sum of money and was too proud

to ask you, my dear friend, for it. I interfere with this officer and save me from public disgrace and utter ruin."

"You did take my ring then?" said George Howell, in a quite even tone of voice that surprised me by its natural composure.

"Oh, yes, I confess it."

"How did you open my safe?"

"I watched you one day when you were working the combination and was able to make it out. Then, became my temptation."

But the ring was also locked in the front of the safe.

"You had a duplicate key to that which was in another drawer that was locked. Oh, my dear friend George!"

"Call me Mr. Howell and leave off the friend," calmly interrupted the other.

"Godfrey Percy, you were to have been married to my sister to-morrow. Only that I saw you with this woman, Howell, has escaped from you, a Percy."

In only another twenty-four hours she would have been the wife of a thief. Go without saying a word to any soul in this dwelling. I give you twenty-four hours' start. If after that time any person sees you, which she will never rest until you are in jail."

He pointed his finger imperiously towards the door, and the condemned culprit in silence arose from his knees and slunk out of sight. That was the last I ever saw or heard of him. Both the brother and sister are now dead. I never knew what the interview was between them. She died in a madhouse in London, and he was drowned on a river excursion in less than a year.—*Ed. Bitts.*